

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My wife and I are proud citizens of the United States of America who happen to have lived in Switzerland for the past ten years. Due to the laws of the United States, our ability to pursue our careers here is severely compromised. Please allow me to tell your our story and ask for your help.

My wife and I have worked hard to build a life together since we met in high school. She studied biology at the University of Virginia. I studied engineering at Vanderbilt. We took our first jobs and found success. We went to business school and sought opportunities at the top of our respective professions. Luckily we each found those opportunities in the same city, Basel, Switzerland.

Miriam now leads global teams for Novartis from her office in Basel to develop innovative therapies to treat disease. I now manage the finances of a business unit at Siemens based in Zurich that reduces the energy used to heat and cool buildings. We take a great deal of satisfaction in our jobs and our accumulation of skills that will benefit people around the world.

But due to the laws of the United States we face a variety of problems. No Swiss bank will lend us money to buy a house where we can raise our family. We are forbidden from investing any of our saved money in Switzerland (or are offered very high fees and complicated structures to do so). We worry constantly that no local banks will allow us remain customers; will we have to receive our salaries as cash in the future? We pay much higher taxes than any our non-American colleagues at work; working for the same salary, we have to set aside 10% of our pay to send to the IRS every year, they spend it in the economy or invest it in businesses. We face complicated tax forms and spend thousands of dollars every year to comply with reporting requirements and to have a tax professional file our US tax declaration.

My hope is to open a business here in Switzerland that helps US manufacturers export their products to Europe. I am uniquely qualified to do that, but it will be very difficult for me to do so if no Swiss bank will have a banking relationship with me in the future. It will also be difficult if I am obligated to pay 10% more to any US citizen employee to equalize their net take-home pay.

If we are serious about helping the US economy and competing in the global economy, we have to tear down the barriers to Americans working and competing around the world.

Please simplify the tax code for US citizens abroad. Please make it easier for honest workers to live abroad.

Regards,

Herbert M Donaldson

Basel Switzerland

